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AFGHANISTAN

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FACT SHEET

Commercialization of Afghanistan Water and Sanitation Activity (CAWSA)

OVERVIEW

USAID's Commercialization of Afghanistan Water and Sanitation Activity (CAWSA) began in November 2008, with the aim of improving the water supply systems of Mazar-e-Sharif, Jalalabad, Ghazni, and Gardez by establishing a viable business model for water service delivery in Afghanistan. This three-year program is conducted in coordination with the Afghan Urban Water Supply and Sewerage Corporation (AUWSSC), provincial water departments, Provincial Reconstruction Teams, and other donors. CAWSA supports the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan's water and sanitation sector reforms, which seek to commercialize the urban water sector, serve more customers, increase cost recovery, and improve management.

CURRENT ACTIVITIES

- Support AUWSSC as a state owned corporation by strengthening the water distribution network operations of its urban Strategic Business Units (SBUs). AUWSSC replaced the state-owned enterprise, the Central Authority for Water Supply and Sewerage (CAWSS), dissolved in 2009.
- Implement modern, efficient operational, commercial, and financial management systems in the four selected SBUs.
- Help the SBUs receive, account for, and maintain former capital assets of CAWSS, including real estate, major water utility infrastructure, inventory, etc., per the mandate of the Ministry of Finance.
- Support the SBUs to receive, train, manage, and pay wages of all CAWSS employees transferred to them.
- Transfer 17 additional provincial water departments to AUWSSC over time as satellites of SBUs.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Transformed four antiquated provincial Water Supply Departments into SBUs to improve service for more than 4,000 new connections, including mosques and public taps, serving more than 41,000 residents. Unit cost of water production dropped significantly in all four SBUs.
- Recruited customer service interns to support the SBUs by reading meters, delivering bills, enforcing collection of delinquent accounts, and promoting public awareness of water conservation and health issues. This included women, who are able to enter homes to read meters when only women are at home. CAWSA introduced improved collection procedures and modern efficient work methods and equipment. Financial/commercial viability of the SBUs improved, as cost recovery ratios, including collection of past due accounts, increased from 32 percent to 41 percent in Jalalabad, 39 percent to 68 percent in Mazar, 42 percent to 79 percent in Ghazni, and 32 percent to 68 percent in Gardez.
- Designed and implemented computerized complaint tracking systems to improve service, quickly address system deficiencies, and reduce the causes of most frequent complaints. Improved service has encouraged more customers to pay on time, as reflected in the improved collection rates.
- Provided maintenance and inspection vehicles for SBUs that were assigned to field inspectors and technical repair crews to improve quality control and accelerate response to emergency calls. The time between an emergency call and the arrival of a repair crew with replacement parts has been reduced by 70 percent as operational efficiency improved.